Organizing Conversation Structure

ISSUES (*Goal: Figure out what issues they care about, agitate, and tell them how a union can help.)*

- Start the conversation by figuring out their **issues**:
    - *"How have things been going for you these days? Still dealing with XYZ?"*
- Practice the **80/20 rule**. **Don't tell them what their issues are, ask them.**
- Figure out what is affecting them **personally** and the **pain points** it creates for them, drawing out the details to expand our understanding and get them talking more freely.
- If the issue they are bringing up doesn't seem to be moving them, there is likely something they care about more, which might be related. Think **broader institutional failures and sources of stress.**
    - If they are annoyed by how their dept admin operate, are they concerned with the lack of transparency or accountability at the Institute? See if that is what is really bothering them, and where else we see that happening.
    - If they are annoyed with the weekend calls with their boss, are they feeling overworked generally? Do they feel the strain or poor work-life balance elsewhere?
- **Agitate** around their issue. Get upset for them and with them, pointing out if something is **unfair** or **unjust** and that MIT must do better. Tell them that they aren't alone - that their issues are collective issues.
- Ask what **change they want to see**, leaving space for them. We will want to help draw it out.
- Finally, we want to connect the changes we want to see happen to **unionization**, especially the **collective power and voice** of **organized grad workers** to bring about this change, as well as the **legal tools** of a union to enact and enforce it **(contract, grievances, steward network, etc.)**
    - This is also a natural place to introduce the union if you haven't done so already. You can say something like: *"I've actually been working with a group of grad workers across campus to build a grad union here to address issues like X. Unions can help with problems like this by..."*
- If you cannot get to their issues, you can appeal to their **solidarity**. Ask if others around them are as lucky as they are and should having a decent experience at MIT depend on your luck? Everyone's luck can change eventually, and MIT isn't built for that.

Call the Question *(Goal: To assess the workers support after the conversation.)*

- Once we have set up some **common ground** on what we want to change and how a union can make that happen, we want to **ask them directly if they are supportive** of unionization at MIT
    - *"Next step of the campaign is signing cards. Can we count on you to sign a card?"*
- This is also where you'll pick up on doubts and questions. **That is a good thing! Address them head on**. If they don't say yes, we want to bring it back to their issues.
    - *"Do you think MIT will change on its own if they don't have to? Can we really win X without a strong union?"*
- Remember we are trying to build support and participation, not score argument points!

EDUCATE *(Goal: Prepare them for anti-union messaging and sentiments.)*

- We want support on campus which **understands and recognizes anti-union talking points.**
- Admin are generally anti-union and specifically anti-grad union, so we must be prepared for a pervasive anti-union campaign once we are public.
- They will try to **sow division, confusion, and fear.** So we need to fight it by **building trust and educating** our peers about unionization generally and our union specifically.

- This can come up naturally in conversation if they have anti-union sentiments, otherwise bring it up by asking someone how they **expect their peers or boss to react** to the idea of unions.
- You can ask - how do you think your coworkers, colleagues, and friends will respond to unionization? What about your PI? What about MIT?
- If they don't think MIT will be against the union - we can cite that MIT fought against grad workers gaining the right to organize at the NLRB, and have hired anti-union lawyers into top positions.

MOVE TO ACTION *(Goal: Make an ask for next steps and always follow up.)*

- This part can feel **awkward** because we aren't used to it. An ask isn't about getting them to do something for you, it is **helping them to do something for themselves and their co-workers.**
- This is basically how we set someone up to take their next step in learning more, getting connected, and contributing to the unionization effort depending on their time and interest.
- Let them take it **one step at a time**, not overwhelming them with too many options on how to get involved or skipping steps in the typical **recruitment process**
    - **Initial convo -> orientation -> organizer training -> union rep**
- The ask should be **specific**, not just vaguely **"getting involved"** since most people will reasonably say no to a commitment like that when we are all very busy.
- The **ladder of asks** is a way to think about making the appropriate ask for someone's level of interest, support, and availability. We should always have a backup ask in mind.
    - **Orientation:** This can be easily motivated as a way to learn more about us. Always set up a follow up meeting to answer questions and think about next steps.
    - **Connections:** Ask who they know that we should connect with (grad leaders, bad experiences, likely supporters, specific coverage gaps, etc.). See if they want to reach out themselves. If not, can they introduce them to us?
- Always **follow up** and make a plan, including a specific time and place to meet up, and exchange contact info (ideally their **phone number**) to make this easier; this is 90% of organizing
- Good organizers are **patiently persistent**, acknowledging that we neither wish to drive people away by being too pushy when they are busy or uninterested, nor to let people fall through the cracks for lack of trying or making assumptions about their lack of interest
    - If they say they are busy, ask if they expect that to change at some point that would be better for you to follow up with them to check back in. Make a note of it!
    - If they are happy with their level of involvement, don't push them through the recruitment process! Provide support and opportunities for them to get more involved.
    - Remember, there are 5000+ grad workers at MIT and some of our most dedicated organizers still haven't even heard about us yet! Keep talking to new people and invest your time and effort in bringing in the people who are most excited about getting involved.